

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 249 - FEBRUARY 8, 1977

1. LEBANON. THERE WERE NO INDICATIONS OF FIGHTING OR SHELLING IN THE BORDER AREA YESTERDAY. THE ISRAELI CABINET DISCUSSED THE SYRIAN PRESENCE NEAR NABATIYA AGAIN SUNDAY AND ISSUED A LOW-KEY COMMUNIQUE ASSERTING THAT THE SITUATION WAS "STILL IN THE PROCESS OF DIPLOMATIC CLARIFICATION." PUBLICLY, HOWEVER, ALLON NOTED THAT NO SYRIAN REPLY HAS YET BEEN RECEIVED TO THE ISRAELI DEMAND THAT THE SYRIAN FORCE PULL BACK AND STATED THAT "THERE IS A LIMIT TO ISRAEL'S PATIENCE."

2. ALLON'S WARNING REFLECTS THE ISRAELI CONCERN THAT THE SYRIAN DEPLOYMENT NEAR NABATIYA IS BECOMING PERMANENT. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE APPARENT PERMANENCE OF THE SYRIAN PRESENCE AND THE ISRAELI PUBLIC DEMAND THAT THE SYRIANS WITHDRAW HAS CREATED A SERIOUS DILEMMA FOR THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. AN "INFORMED OBSERVER" SUGGESTED
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IN THE JERUSALEM POST THAT THIS DILEMMA COULD BE RESOLVED BY AN ISRAELI-LEBANESE-SYRIAN AGREEMENT (UNDER US AUSPICES). THE AGREEMENT COULD SPELL OUT THE STRENGTH, LOCATION, AND COMPOSITION OF ASF FORCES

IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. A TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE WOULD OVERSEE THE DEPLOYMENT OF SMALL ASF CONTINGENTS TO

THE AGREED AREAS. THE POST'S SOURCE ADDED THAT ISRAEL MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO ACCEPT SUCH AN AGREEMENT, EVEN THOUGH IT COULD PROVIDE FOR THE POSITIONING OF SYRIAN TROOPS CLOSER TO ISRAEL'S BORDER. REUTER, HOWEVER, QUOTED ISRAELI OFFICIALS AS SAYING IN RESPONSE TO THIS SPECULATION THAT ISRAEL HAD NO NEW PROPOSALS ON THE ISSUE. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

3. ISRAEL. ALLON STATED YESTERDAY THAT, WHILE ISRAEL WILL HEAR THE VIEWS OF UN SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM AND EXPRESS THEIR OWN TO HIM DURING HIS UPCOMING VISIT, THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT "HAS NO INTENTION OF GIVING THE UN ANY ROLE" IN MIDEAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. INSTEAD, ALLON SAID, ISRAEL VIEWS THE US AS THE ONLY MEDIATOR OF THE MIDEAST CONFLICT.

4. PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND DEFENSE MINISTER PERES HAVE AGREED THAT THE LABOR PARTY CANDIDATE FOR PRIME MINISTER WILL BE CHOSEN ON FEBRUARY 23 BY A SECRET BALLOT OF THE DELEGATES TO THE PARTY'S CONVENTION. THIS REVERSES AN EARLIER PARTY DECISION THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WOULD CHOOSE THE CANDIDATE.

5. A POLL PUBLISHED YESTERDAY IN THE INDEPENDENT DAILY HAARETZ GIVES RABIN A SIZABLE LEAD OVER PERES AMONG LABOR PARTY MEMBERS, ALTHOUGH PERES PLACED SLIGHTLY AHEAD OF RABIN AS THE PUBLIC CHOICE FOR PRIME MINISTER. THE US EMBASSY IN TEL AVIV, HOWEVER, CAUTIONS AGAINST TRANSLATING THE PREFERENCE FOR RABIN AMONG PARTY MEMBERS
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INTO CONVENTION VOTES, NOTING THAT SOME WHO PREFER RABIN MIGHT VOTE FOR PERES BECAUSE OF HIS APPEAL FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

6. JERUSALEM RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT ALLON WOULD MEET WITH FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER GUIRINGAUD IN BRUSSELS TODAY, TO DISCUSS FRANCO-ISRAELI RELATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN STRAINED SINCE THE ABU DAOUD AFFAIR. A PRINCIPAL TOPIC IS EXPECTED TO BE A REVIEW OF THE ISRAEL-FRANCE EXTRADITION TREATY. ALLON IS IN BELGIUM TO SIGN TWO PROTOCOLS TO A COMMON MARKET TRADE AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL. FINAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING WERE REPORTEDLY MADE WHEN THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO PARIS CONFERRED WITH GUIRINGAUD YESTERDAY. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. JORDAN. IN A TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW, KING HUSSEIN EXPRESSED HIS OPTIMISM THAT MOVEMENT TOWARD A PEACE SETTLEMENT IS POSSIBLE THIS YEAR, BUT WARNED AGAINST CREATING THE IMPRESSION THAT A FINAL SOLUTION IS IMMINENT.

HUSSEIN STRESSED THAT THE PALESTINIANS MUST PARTICIPATE AT A RECONVENED GENEVA CONFERENCE, SO AS TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE THEIR VIEWS KNOWN. THE JORDANIAN LEADER ALSO REITERATED THE LONG-HELD ARAB STANCE THAT JERUSALEM MUST BE RETURNED TO THE ARABS AS A PREREQUISITE TO PEACE. (UNCLASSIFIED)

8. PALESTINIANS. THE VOICE OF PALESTINE REPORTED YESTERDAY THAT THE PNC WOULD MEET IN CAIRO ON MARCH 12 AT ARAB LEAGUE HEADQUARTERS. THE BROADCAST NOTED THAT THE SESSION HAD BEEN POSTPONED FROM THE END OF FEBRUARY DUE TO ARAB LEAGUE PREPARATIONS FOR THE ARAB-AFRICAN SUMMIT CONFERENCE AND FOR THE KHARTOUM MINI-SUMMIT. IN FACT, HOWEVER, INTERNAL BICKERING, ESPECIALLY OVER WANING PALESTINIAN FORTUNES IN LEBANON, HAVE BEEN MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FREQUENT DEFERMENTS. THE MODERATE FACTION OF PLO CHIEF ARAFAT GENERALLY FEARS THAT THE
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SESSIONS MIGHT DEVOLVE INTO A FORUM FOR EXTREMIST RECRIMINATIONS AGAINST HIS LEADERSHIP. (SECRET)

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